

The Role of Board Champions

1 Purpose of the paper

1.1 This paper seeks to get agreement on the proposed role of the Board as Champions.

1.2 The Board is asked to:

- **Agree**, with any additions, the areas proposed in paragraph 4.5
- **Agree** that allocation of members to areas will be finalised at the April Board Seminar
- **Agree** that the Champions role should be accommodated within our Governance framework (para 4.3)

2 Strategic aims

2.1 This work supports **Goal 5** of the FSS Strategic Plan: Be respected as an authority on food protection and public health nutrition, promoting change through impactful relationships within and beyond Scotland that enable us to influence, learn and collaborate. **Outcome 5** is also paramount: FSS is trusted and influential.

3 Background

3.1 At the August 2023 Seminar the Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Strategic Plan was presented to the Board. The Board were asked to note the strategic direction of FSS in this area and discuss how they saw their role as Board members in relation to it and the wider communications and engagement strategic plan. The upshot of discussions was that the Board were happy to support this work and would like to be guided on the best ways in which to do so.

3.2 A further presentation at the October Board Seminar demonstrated how FSS see Board members supporting the work of the organisation on the national stage. This stimulated further discussion on the Boards' appetite to engage/ contribute towards specific areas of FSS work, taking on the role of Board Champions to support strategic priorities, stimulate increased discussion at board meetings and further raise the profile, visibility and advocacy of FSS.

4 Discussion

4.1 The role of the FSS Board is defined below:

4.2 *The Food Standards Scotland board members provide strategic oversight, regulatory guidance, and expertise across various aspects of food safety, nutrition, and consumer protection to ensure the well-being of the Scottish public.*

4.3 This statement is very broad when looking at the full remit of FSS and the concept of Board Champions is intended to develop expertise of Board members on key aspects of FSS business to help inform the full Board discussion and debate. The proposal doesn't alter the fact that all Board members remain responsible for the full FSS remit and decision making. For consistency and transparency, it is also recommended that the role of Board Champions is captured within our governance framework. In addition, the role of the champions will increase board visibility with the relevant teams and ensure that they have a solid understanding of the scale and scope of the work we're doing in a particular space. This will lead to more in depth and informed discussion at board meetings and seminars, as well as providing assurance to other board members of the Executive's activities. There are benefits for staff at all levels having more frequent engagement with Board members, whether that be through quarterly attendance at divisional meetings or involvement in governance groups aligned with our strategic priorities.

4.4 To progress this proposal and inform decisions on which area each Board member will champion, it is suggested that the Board discuss and agree the areas of focus before considering which board member should be assigned to each area. The process for aligning Board Members will take into account the experience, knowledge and interests of the members to achieve the best fit across all areas.

4.5 Below are some suggested areas of focus taking into account the strategic priorities, as outlined in the Corporate Plan as well as other priority areas:

- Public health nutrition
- Data and Digital transformation
- Food crime and incidents
- Local Authority (LA) delivery
- Official control delivery for food and feed
- Regulatory reform
- SAFER
- Science – to note this is progressing based on previous Board discussion and the departure of the Chief Scientific Adviser

- 4.6 Note that some of the strategic priorities are intrinsically linked, for example LA delivery, official controls and digital transformation all overlap when looking at potential innovations presented by the SAFER programme. This will become clearer as the champion role develops and may mean we want to re-visit it.
- 4.7 These priorities also cut across different divisions, for example food crime and incidents is linked to the work of the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (SFCIU), Science and enforcement delivery.
- 4.8 Then there are the support functions that underpin the priorities, for example corporate services, audit, science and communications. However, these are covered to some degree by the Finance and Business Committee and Audit Committee.
- 4.9 Recent examples of how the Board has assisted with a specific priority area would be the support Kate Richards has provided in relation to vet resourcing challenges, which falls under the priority area 'official controls'. Kate has worked with the Communications team to develop video content to promote the profession and unpick some of the misconceptions and benefits of a career in the Civil Service. Kate has also provided advice to the ops delivery division around some of the challenges FSS face in recruiting vets more generally. This has proven to be valuable.
- 4.10 Paula Charlesworth sits on the Public Health Nutrition Forum and hears first hand and contributes to discussions on the work of the group and the challenges it faces in delivering the strategy. Paula's contributions have been welcomed and bring a different perspective given her first-hand experience and expertise.
- 4.11 The above example highlight the areas that Paula and Kate would naturally gravitate towards. However, allocation of responsibilities doesn't need to be driven by professional expertise; an interest in a particular area is just as important.

5 Questions for the Board

- 5.1 Are the Board content with the proposed areas in paragraph 4.5 or are there other areas of interest the Board would like included?
- 5.2 How would the Board like decisions to be made where there more than one board member is interested in an area? eg Chair decision or Exec recommendation to the Board.
- 5.3 Are the Board content that final decisions will be made at the April Seminar?

6 Identification of risks and issues

- 6.1 The proposed approach works to mitigate the strategic risk around misinformation. Strengthening the FSS brand and reputation with key stakeholders to cut through misinformation, stand out in a noisy landscape and be the trusted source for information backed by science and evidence.

- 6.2 Time. It is important to balance the commitment required by Board members with their other responsibilities. Contributions should be monitored to ensure effective time management and periodic reviews should be in place to ensure adjustments of roles are considered where necessary.

7 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 7.1 Our commitment and contribution to equality & diversity is embedded in our everyday working practices.
- 7.2 The communications mechanisms we directly manage are written in plain language, available on request in a variety of formats and meet best practice guidelines for equalities.
- 7.3 We consult with hard-to-reach, minority and disabled representatives to ensure that communications and channels are fit for purpose.
- 7.4 We ensure that designed / printed materials meet good practice for accessibility, equality and diversity.

8 Conclusion/Recommendations

- 8.1 The Board is asked to:
- **Agree**, with any additions, the areas proposed in paragraph 4.5
 - **Agree** that allocation of members to areas will be finalised at the April Board Seminar?
 - **Agree** that the Champions role should be accommodated within our Governance framework (para 4.3)

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